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**SELF-CONSCIOUSNESS, SELF-EFFICACY AND TEACHER-
STUDENT RELATIONAL COMPETENCE IN A SAMPLE OF
TEACHERS**

Cristina - Corina Bentea (a)*

*Corresponding author

(a) "Dunarea de Jos" University of Galati, Domneasca Street No 63, Galati, Romania, cristina.bentea@ugal.ro

Abstract

Researchers and school practitioners have been interested in examining relationships between personality variables and job capacities which are necessary for teaching profession. Teacher self-efficacy, perceived competence toward teacher-student relationship, private and public self-consciousness and social anxiety are the variables which are taking into consideration in the present study. The purpose of the study is to investigate relationship between teacher self-efficacy and self-perception of the teacher-student relationship competence depending on the strength of self-consciousness and social anxiety. A total of 141 teachers from preschool, primary and secondary schools participated in the study. Participants completed three self-reported instruments. Results indicated significant differences in the self-evaluation of the competence toward teacher-student relationship depending on the level of self-efficacy in teachers with increased social anxiety and public self-consciousness and among teachers who are low and high in private self-consciousness. Teachers who have high self-efficacy expectations should be more likely interested in understanding their students' feelings and opinions, attempt effectively to help their students to overcome their difficulties and more concerned about fostering educational climate in relation with their students than teachers with low level of self-efficacy. Teachers who have low or high tendencies to pay attention to their personal and intimate aspects of self but are high in self-efficacy tend to evaluate their competence toward teacher-student interaction as more increased. The limitations of the study were discussed.

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Keywords: Teacher, self-efficacy, social anxiety, self-consciousness, teacher-student relational competence."



1. Introduction

Researchers and school practitioners have been interested in the pedagogical self-awareness and as an important ability in teaching profession. In order to become good teachers is important to enable teaching skills and self-awareness features through a continuous evaluating of their actions and behaviours from their students' perspective, become aware of their strengths and characteristics as teachers, develop a meaningful knowledge about them as individuals and about their own emotions and attitudes, and understand themselves in relation to others. School psychologist and practitioners have suggested that developing the ability of teacher-student interaction means to treat teaching as a public rather than a private activity by understanding students' views and how they react to the teaching style. A discerning, clear and coherent self-awareness related with an accurate capacity of perception, control and monitor their own behaviour, both from public and private perspectives, can be understood as necessary abilities of a good teacher.

2. Problem Statement

Often characterized as a personality dimension or disposition (Carver, Antoni, & Scheier, 1985), self-consciousness has been conceptualized as a dispositional tendency of individuals to maintain self-awareness (Fenigstein, Scheier, & Buss, 1975). Self-consciousness is related with self-awareness which is defined as the state of self-directed attention (Fenigstein, Scheier, & Buss, 1975). Self-consciousness consists of two distinct forms, private and public self-consciousness (Buss, 1980), and social anxiety. The first two independent dimensions refer to different perspectives from individuals can perceive themselves: from their own perspective and from others perspective (Carver, 2012; Fenigstein, 2009). The private dimension of self-consciousness can be understood as persons' tendency to focus the awareness on their inner "thoughts, feelings, attitudes, motives, and behavioural tendencies" (Scheier, & Carver, 1981, p. 46) while the public dimension of self-consciousness is defined as "the tendency to be aware of the publicly displayed aspects of the self" (Scheier & Carver, 1981, p. 46) with reference to the individual's awareness of self as a social object (Buss, 1980). Research findings have confirmed the distinction between these two subtypes of self-consciousness (Mor & Winquist, 2002). The main distinction between the two dimensions refers to the direction of focusing and maintain attention: inward, on internal experiences and emotions or outward, on evaluation of the self as a public object (Mor & Winquist, 2002). While private self-consciousness involves examination feelings and perceptions without reference to others, public self-consciousness involves examination person's behaviour and physical appearance by taking into account the social context (Mor & Winquist, 2002). Related with self-consciousness as result of the focusing attention on oneself, social anxiety is defined as the discomfort experienced in the presence of others (Carver, Antoni, & Scheier, 1985; Fenigstein, Scheier, & Buss, 1975). Previous research examined relation of self-consciousness dimensions to other personality traits and social and emotional variables. Research findings demonstrated positive relations between increased self-consciousness, anxiety, and lower self-esteem (Nystedt & Ljungberg, 2002) in adult population. Empirical studies have suggested a positive effect of private self-consciousness on openness and agreeableness, self-monitoring (Miller, Omens, & Delvadia, 1991) and generalized anxiety (Mor & Winquist, 2002), while public self-consciousness is positively related to neuroticism (Scandell, 1998) and social anxiety (Mor & Winquist, 2002).

Although there was a growing interest in investigations on the construct of self-consciousness and its dimensions, less empirical attention has been paid to its association with other teacher personality variables. The present study intends to address this possibility. Self-efficacy is another important concept related with teaching job requirements and commitment. Studies concerning the assessment of teachers' self-perception of job competencies relied on Bandura's view (1997) who defined the construct of perceived self-efficacy within the framework of his socio-cognitive theory. Perceived self-efficacy has been defined as an individuals' perceptions about their own abilities to design and carry out a course of action to achieve a given goal (Bandura, 1986, 1997). Self-efficacy beliefs can vary in intensity: the higher individuals perceive their competence in a certain domain, the more likely it is that they will perform in that domain of activity (Bandura, 1997). Teachers' beliefs about their abilities to perform in educational activities has been conceptualized as teacher self-efficacy. Teachers' efforts and targets in educational contexts differ depending on self-efficacy beliefs (Tschannen-Moran & Woolfolk Hoy, 2001). Teacher self-efficacy or instructional self-efficacy refers to personal beliefs about one's capabilities to help students learn (Woolfolk Hoy, Hoy, & Davis, 2009). The concept has been applied to the teachers' perceptions in their own capacities of planning, organizing, and implementing the educational tasks. Tschannen-Moran, Woolfolk Hoy, & Hoy (1998) made the distinction between general teacher efficacy, which refers to teachers' beliefs in the ability to influence student outcomes, and personal teacher efficacy which refers to teachers' beliefs about their own ability to affect student outcomes.

Teachers' sense of efficacy may differ across the different tasks that they are required to perform (Bandura, 1997) and involves beliefs and expectations in particular major areas of teaching profession such as job accomplishment, skill development on the job, social interaction with students, parents, and colleagues, and coping with job stress (Schwarzer, Schmitz, & Daytner, 1999). Efficacy expectations and beliefs about students and teaching-learning activities have a significant influence on teachers' behaviour in classroom and relationships with students (Woolfolk Hoy & Weinstein, 2006). Teacher efficacy affects the efforts they put into teaching and in relationships with students. On the other hand, in the teaching profession, the sense of personal accomplishment depends on the quality of teacher-student interactions. Teachers' feelings of competence and successful achievement in their work are strongly related to the self-perceptions of the effective interactions with students as teachers' recipients. More specifically, we are interested to examine self-perceptions of the teacher-student relationship competence which refers to teachers' feelings of competence and achievement in the relationship with their students. This personal competence toward the relationship with their students is more specific and individual than a general belief about what teachers in general can accomplish in teaching profession. Thus, teachers who are more able to establish efficient relationships with their students tend to perceive themselves as more competent in this domain and are more inclined to evaluate their self-efficacy for teaching on higher levels.

3. Research Questions

In view of the above mentioned specifications, the guiding question was as follows: What is the relationship between teacher self-efficacy and self-perception of the teacher-student relationship competence in teachers with different levels of self-consciousness and social anxiety? In other words, how

evaluate their personal competence toward the relationship with their students depending on their teacher self-efficacy in teachers with high and low self-consciousness and social anxiety?

4. Purpose of the Study

The present study aims to investigate differences in the relationship between teacher self-efficacy and perceived personal competence toward teacher-student relationship depending on the strength of self-consciousness. The following hypotheses were tested:

H1. We presume differences in the perceived competence toward teacher-student relationship depending on the level of teacher self-efficacy in teachers who are low in private self-consciousness.

H2. We presume differences in the evaluation of personal competence toward teacher-student relationship depending on the level of teacher self-efficacy in teachers who are high in private self-consciousness.

H3. We presume differences in the perception of personal competence toward teacher-student relationship depending on the level of teacher self-efficacy in teachers who are low in public self-consciousness.

H4. We presume differences in the perception of personal competence toward teacher-student relationship depending on the level of teacher self-efficacy in teachers who are high in public self-consciousness.

H5. We presume differences in the perception of personal competence toward teacher-student relationship depending on the level of teacher self-efficacy in teachers who are low in social anxiety.

H6. We presume differences in the perception of personal competence toward teacher-student relationship depending on the level of teacher self-efficacy in teachers who are high in social anxiety.

5. Research Methods

5.1. Participants

A total of 141 school teachers, 122 females and 19 males, with ages ranged from 23 to 48 (mean age=31.26, SD=7.51) participated in the study. 32 of participants were preschool teachers, 38 primary school teachers, and 71 secondary school teachers. The participants' teaching experience ranged from 1 to 27 years (mean age=8.13, S =7.83). 97 participants were from urban and 44 from rural environment.

5.2. Measures

Participants completed three self-reported instruments.

Teacher self-efficacy. Teacher Self-Efficacy Scale (TSE-S) (Schwarzer, Schmitz, & Daytner, 1999) consists of 10 items which assess participants' self-perception about their teaching efficacy. Examples of items are "When I try really hard, I am able to reach even the most difficult students", and "I am confident in my ability to be responsive to my students' needs even if I am having a bad day". Participants indicated their degree of agreement to various statements on a 4-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (not at all true) to 4 (exactly true). The items are all positively worded and direct in the content. The reliability of the scale measured by Cronbach's alpha coefficient was .78. The final score was calculated as a mean of the items.

Self-Consciousness. The Self-Consciousness - Revised Scale - SCS-R (Scheier & Carver, 1985) measures the individuals' self-reflection capacity. The 22 item-scale, for use with general populations, comprises three subscales: Private self-consciousness (Pr-SC), consists of 9 items (ex. "I think about myself a lot" and "I sometimes step back (in my mind) in order to examine myself from a distance"), Public self-consciousness (Pu-SC), consists of 7 items (ex. "I'm concerned about my style of doing things" and "I'm concerned about what other people think of me"), and Social Anxiety (So-An), consists of 6 items (ex. "It takes me time to get over my shyness in new situations" and "I feel nervous when I speak in front of a group"). High scores indicated high levels of self-reflection. Responses are rated on a 4-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (not like me at all) to 4 (a lot like me). Each factor was calculated as mean of the items whereby that construct was measured. The scale has shown good psychometrical properties: Cronbach's alphas were .807 for the Private self-consciousness subscale, .783 for the Public self-consciousness subscale, .784 for the Social anxiety subscale, and .905 for the total scale.

Teacher-student Relationship Competence. According to Maslach & Jackson (1981), personal accomplishment, as one of three components of burnout, measures feelings of competence and successful achievement in one's work. In order to measure perceived competence toward teacher-student relationship was used Personal achievement subscale (PA) of Maslach Burnout Inventory-Educators Survey (MBI-ES) (Maslach, Jackson, & Leiter, 1996). The PA subscale measures the reduction of personal accomplishment as one of three dimensions of burnout. All 8 items are rated using a 7-point Likert scale ranging from 0 ("never") to 6 ("every day"). The Cronbach's alpha of the initial Personal achievement subscale was .821. Three items which assess teachers' self-evaluations of their competence in relation with students were retained from the initial subscale. The three extracted items were: "I can easily understand how my students feel about things"; "I deal very effectively with the problems of my students", and "I can easily create a relaxed atmosphere with my students". All the items measure teachers' feelings of responsibility and confidence that they are doing their teaching activity well in relationships with their students. This aspect of efficacy measured by the three items has been labeled perceived competence toward teacher-student relationship. This specific competence was calculated as mean of these three items. The Cronbach's alpha of the factor was .834.

Participants with missing data on applied scales were removed from the samples. Participants received extra course credits for their participating in the study.

6. Findings

Means and standard deviations for all measures were calculated. Pearson correlation coefficients were computed to examine the associations between all variables. Descriptive statistics and Pearson correlations are presented in table 1.

Table 01. Descriptive statistics and correlations of the variables

		m	SD	1	2	3	4	5
1	TS-RC	5.30	.89	1				
2	PA	5.17	.85	.877**	1			
3	TSE-S	3.69	.30	.457**	.452**	1		
4	So-An	3.21	.55	-.133	-.193*	-.096	1	
5	Pr-SC	3.53	.41	.091	.026	.094	.686**	1
6	Pu-SC	3.83	.29	.053	.028	.146*	.686**	.753**

** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level.

* Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level.

As could be seen in Table 1, the perceived teacher-student competence both positively correlates with self-efficacy ($r = .45$, $p < .001$) and personal achievement subscale ($r = .87$, $p < .001$). Negative low significant relationship was specified between personal achievement subscale and social anxiety ($r = -.19$, $p < .05$). Also, private and public self-consciousness subscales positively correlate each other ($r = .75$, $p < .001$), consistent with past research (Fenigstein, Scheier, & Buss, 1975) and have significant positive high associations with social anxiety ($r = .68$, $p < .001$).

Before proceeding to the analysis, participants were divided into high versus low social anxiety, private and public self-consciousness subgroups based on the mean of the subscales of the SCS-R. Also, depending on the pretest mean of the TSE-S the group was split in participants who are high versus low in self-efficacy.

To assess differences in the perceived relational competence depending on the level of teacher self-efficacy, independent t-test was applied for each subgroup.

Results reveal no significant differences in the perceived competence toward teacher-student relationship in teachers with low social anxiety ($N_1=57$) depending on their level of self-efficacy. In teachers with increased social anxiety ($N_2=84$) were significant differences in the evaluation of personal competence toward teacher-student relationship ($m_1-m_2 = -.81$, $t = -3.19$, $p < .01$) between teachers with low and high self-efficacy.

Also, results indicated significant differences in the perceived competence toward teacher-student relationship dimension ($m_1-m_2 = -.65$, $t = -2.05$, $p < .05$) depending on the level of teacher self-efficacy in teachers with low private self-consciousness ($N_1=43$). In teachers who are high in private self-consciousness ($N_1=98$) were significant differences in the perceived personal competence ($m_1-m_2 = -.65$, $t = -2.84$, $p < .01$) between teachers with low and high self-efficacy.

Concerning teachers who are low in public self-consciousness ($N_1=36$) results of independent t-test did not show any significant differences in the perceived competence scores depending on the level of perceived self-efficacy. Also, in teachers with high public self-consciousness ($N_2=105$) were significant differences in the perceived teacher-student relational competence ($m_1-m_2 = -.82$, $t = -3.42$, $p < .01$) between teachers with low and high self-efficacy.

7. Conclusion

In the present research, it was tried to test the differences in the perceived personal competence toward teacher-student relationship depending on the level of perceived self-efficacy in teachers with low and high social anxiety and capacity of self-reflection. Results indicated that teachers who are characterized by increased social anxiety and low self-perception of their teaching efficacy reported more negative self-evaluations of the competence toward relationship with their students than teachers with increased social anxiety and high perception of their teaching efficacy. Thus, teachers who experienced a great account of discomfort in the presence of others and perceived their teaching capacities to be lower tend to evaluate their competence in relation with students lower than teachers who reported higher levels of self-efficacy in their teaching work.

Also, teachers with low private self-consciousness and low level of self-perception of their teaching efficacy differ from those with low private self-consciousness and high level of teaching self-efficacy in

their evaluations of personal competence toward teacher-student interaction. The decreasing in the feeling of personal competence toward the relationship with their students is more obvious reported in teachers with low self-efficacy and low capacity of reflection about their own person. Further, in the subgroup of teachers who are high in private self-consciousness, those with lower level of self-perception of their teaching efficacy differ from those with higher teaching self-efficacy in their evaluations of the relational competence. More specifically, teachers who are both higher in private consciousness and self-efficacy expectations should be more likely interested in the relationship with their students and perceive themselves as more competent in relations with their students than teachers with low levels of efficacy.

Finally, in teachers who are characterized of high public self-reflection capacity, those with high perceived teaching self-efficacy reported higher self-evaluations of teacher-student relation competence than teachers with lower perceived self-efficacy who reported more negative evaluations. So, teachers who tend to examine their behaviour and appearance in the social context more carefully and have feelings of competence toward their work performances expressed more positive self-evaluations of the personal competence toward relation with students than teachers who are high in public self-consciousness but low in teaching self-efficacy.

The current study examined the perception of the personal competence toward teacher-student relationship depending on the level of self-efficacy in teachers with low and high social anxiety and capacity of self-consciousness in a Romanian teacher sample. Concerning our starting hypotheses, we found significant differences in the evaluations of the perceived relational competence between teachers with low and high self-efficacy and who are high in social anxiety dimension, low and high in the private self-consciousness, and high in their public consciousness. More specifically, teachers who are both higher in self-efficacy expectations should be more likely interested in understanding their students' feelings and opinions, attempt effectively to help their students to overcome their difficulties in learning activity and more concerned about fostering educational climate in relation with their students than teachers with low levels of efficacy. Moreover, teachers who have low or high tendencies to pay attention to their personal and intimate aspects of self but are high in self-efficacy perceive their ability to interact with students more increased.

The present study has a number of limitations. So, research participants were teachers in preschool, primary and secondary schools selected from two regions of the country. Thus, the sample may not be representative for all teachers in Romania. Also, perceived competence toward teacher-student relation was assessed only through three items.

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